Goddess Anagha Devi

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Born in the year 1945 in Tamilnadu, and basically a Printing Technologist, I served in various Central Govt organizations such as Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) under the then Ministry of Scientific affairs, Govt of India; Bank Note Press, Ministry of Finance, Dept of Economic Affairs, Govt of India, Dewas, engaged in the printing of Bank Notes and Currencies, before finally superannuated in the capacity of a senior official in the year 2005. After retirement I worked in the capacity of a Consultant in Security Printing; obtained a Patent on new technique for numbering of currencies and participated in an international conference in Hongkong as a special invitee to present a paper on counterfeiting menace.

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As per Vedic and mythological beliefs, Lord Dattatreya manifested 80 million years ago* in Treta Yuga which began 2.16 million years ago and lasted thereafter for 1,296,000 human years, the 10th in Yuga cycle.

A Kalpa, i.e a period of 4.32 billion human years is one day (and an equal length of night) of Lord Brahma. At the end of one Kalpa, Lord Brahma along with entire fleet of divines and all living entities in the universe enter into the body of Parabrahman and merge with him, a state called non-manifestation or sleep within the Supreme Being who is non but Parabrahman himself. After the dissolution of the universe thus, Parabrahman again brings out a new cosmos when Lord Brahma again recreates everything afresh.

As per the scientific theory called 'Big Bang', the present universe which we see today appeared 13.7 billion years ago. The sight of species walking with two legs, meaning first antecedents of humans appeared only before six to seven million years; therefore, Lord Dattatreya, the embodiment of Trimurtis, may have also manifested during such yuga to uphold the traditions of dharma as Gnanamurti, the personification of spiritual wisdom.

Ever since he manifested, he appeared both visible and invisible, to guide and impart wisdom to both the divines and human race toward spiritual advancement. In Tretha Yuga, Lord Dattatreya appeared in the form of an Avadhoot to bestow wisdom to the seekers, however, in Kali Yuga, he guided the seekers only through the spiritual masters who were his incarnates.

It may surprise what kind of spiritual guidance the divines with divine powers may need. It is true that the divines manifest with divine powers beyond our contemplation, but when some of the divines took birth on earth in physical form, to perform penance to redeem some of the curses incurred by them on several occasions in celestial spaces, they do need guidance to perform specific deeds, or to achieve a certain level of understanding to break the curse as they will be sans of divine powers while in physical form as human.

The philosophy behind this is beyond the contemplation of humans to understand. Some philosophical stances maintain that the fundamental nature of the universe or the existence of a higher power is fundamentally unknowable or unprovable to humans.

In order to save the mankind from suffering in Kali Yuga, several thousands of years ago, not only Lord Dattathreya manifested in the form of a wandering Avadhoot, but also, he created a shadow emanation in the form of a female Goddess called Anagha Devi to assist him in some manner. He realized that he has to act suitably to guide the folks to escape the wrath of Kali Yuga (Age of Darkness) when there will be decline in dharma (righteousness), morality, physical strength, and lifespan. Therefore, the act of spiritual guidance to escape the fury of Kali needed to be applied twin fold i.e gender-specific mode; spiritual guidance for men, and penances/poojas for women.

While Lord Dattathreya decided that he will impart spiritual guidance to the male part in many ways and means to tread the spiritual path, the female needed to be guided to perform penances, vrath and poojas to gain ability to merge

thoughts with inner soul which will ultimately strengthen the spiritual path.

It is not difficult to understand why the female deities have been given prominence in many acts of divine. If one read the texts of Vedas, Puranas and other scriptures, they will see numerous instances of female deities displaying active and aggressive powers to uphold cosmic order; they were involved in intense battles fought against demons, asuras, evil forces to aid the male divines either directly or indirectly.

Most of the vrath and poojas performed center around female deities, who are revered as various emanations of the divine feminine energy known as Parashakti. This energy is considered an essential and dynamic aspect of the Supreme Being called Parabrahman, which is actually a union of male and female energies within which Lord Dattathreya too stand.

Lord Dattatreya, in his guise as a male Avadhoot, manifested his female energy as Goddess Anagha Devi to reveal to the universe that male and female deities are not separate, but ultimately one and the same from Parabrahman. His act of emanating Goddess Anagha Devi demonstrated that outward appearances, including gender of the divines are merely illusions, though each one of them appeared as if they were individual power centres either for creation or destruction for reasons of their own.

Manifestation of Anagha Devi

Goddess Anagha Devi's manifestation stand testimony to the philosophy of Lord Dattathreya who wanted both male

and female combination to mould folks to tread the path of spirituality during Kaliyuga. The manifestation of Goddess Anaha is quite interesting.

According to Datta Purana, once several sages and Maharishis who were in penance on the banks of a river, one day spotted Lord Dattatreya in the form of a wandering Avadhoot at a far-off distance on the banks of a pond. Since many had heard lots of stories on him, instantly realizing his greatness, they rushed to him, offered their respect and sought his guidance on the ways and means to attain Gnana marga called wisdom from the whole of creation. Lord Dattatreya taught the path to Gnana marga (wisdom) by explaining that the entire universe is a teacher and that valuable spiritual lessons can be learned from observing every aspect of creation. He famously cited twenty-four specific entities in nature and life as his gurus. Who those twenty-four specific entities in nature are can be read in detail in Dattathreya Charithra.

One may find in Datta Purana, and narratives in Datta sampradaya traditions that Lord Dattathreya never accepted anyone as his disciple unless their mental agility to withstand the hardship of the penance and sincerity to accept him as their master is tested rigorously.

In such background, when they collectively went to him and aired their desire, Lord Dattathreya, desirous to test them before accepting as his disciple, suddenly jumped into the water body and disappeared. He remained submerged inside the pond for several hundred years. Shocked at his sudden disappearance, few of the sages who came there went away after waiting for some time feeling they will waste time for his re appearance soon, but few other sages,

steadfast in their mind to get his guidance, continued to wait on the banks of the pond expecting his reappearance anytime, but Lord Dattatreya remained in a state of complete Samadhi inside the pond for several hundred years.

The very long periods of waiting stretching to even several thousand years is not a big news for many saints and sages who have penanced over several thousands of years, example being sage Athri who penanced for over thousand years to beget an offspring.

After several hundred years, before emerging out of the pond, Lord Dattathreya came out in the most controversial form to further test the remaining sages and saints. First a beautiful looking celestial woman appeared from inside the pond, potentially displaying classic form of dancing and holding pitcher full of wine which are traditionally associated with the material world rather than austere asceticism. Unaware that the beautiful lady who appeared from the pond was none but an aspect of divine play orchestrated by Lord Dattatreya, the sages and saints stood in stoic silence in unbelievable shock. Unknown of Devi's youthful origin, some of the waiting sages called her Madhumati (seeing her drinking wine), while some called her Nathi (seeing her dance like a river), still some realized her true form (as Lord Dattatreya's creation) as a female Goddess and worshipped her as female Dattatreya.

The matured sages were convinced that similar to Lord Dattatreya (Anagha Deva) being the combined incarnation of Tridev (Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwar), so would Anagha Devi be the embodiment of Three devis, consorts of Trimurtis (Goddesses Saraswathi, Lakshmi, and Parvati).

They were sure that she is a motherly creation who will bestow motherly affection to her devotees and Anagha Devi is the sakthi of Lord Dattatreya as she resides within him.

While the inner mind of everyone wavered around with several thoughts on the aspects and attributes of the female emerged, Lord Dattatreya came out of the state of samadhi, appeared before the sages and declared that the female was none other than Goddess Anagha Devi created from his own yogic energy. He named the yogic energy as Anagha (one who was pure and sinless) and declared her to be his consort who is inherent part of him. Thus, the divine couple appeared in the form of Anagha Deva and Anagha Devi before the saints and sages.

He explained to the waiting sages and Maharishis that the reason behind this leela or divine play was to make them aware that there was none like 'He' or 'She' in divine and all were one, which was 'He' alone. The almighty is both formless and in several forms. Lord Dattathreya wanted the disciples to understand that God cannot be classified as male and female. He is also she and she is also he. Whatever the appearances are, the original form of Shakti/energy is beyond the gender differentiation and one might not even find out in which aspects or in what form the Shakti is present in the universe. Only those who were conscious of the philosophy that divines in multi appearances and multi genders- male, female or neuter gender were creations of the same energy, would be able to enter into the path of him i.e Lord Dattatreya.

Why did Lord Dattathreya give her the name Anagha? While mere Agha meant causes of suffering, the word

Anagha referred to the remover of the sufferings. The state of Agha is poverty, disease, and fear of enemies, greed, and ignorance which lead to suffering in many ways, while the one who removed all sufferings by bestowing prosperity, health, affection, contentment, wisdom, etc was called Anagha. Hence Anagha Devi represented destroyer of sufferings by bestowing prosperity. Goddess Anagha Devi appeared as a female ascetic since she emerged from the divine energies of Lord Dattatreya who was an Avadhoot. As she appeared in the form of Anagha Devi, a female ascetic, the Lord too turned himself as Anagha Deva, her divine partner. Lord Dattatreya had many manifestations in different forms and appearances. It is stated that Lord Dattatreya has incarnated in 16 different forms.

Since Anagha Devi was born out of the yogic energy of Lord Dattatreya, she was portrayed as a very beautiful woman with a bright face, eyes partly closed like Lord Datta. She was seen seated in a lotus position wearing an anklet embroidered with bells. She carried a lotus in one hand while the other hand displayed abhaya mudra which is the sign of protection. Sometimes Anagha Devi was seen with all the aspects of Lord Shiva like-third eye, braided hair, rudraksha on the neck, Ganges flowing down from the braided hair and moon on other side of the head. Divine vehicle of Lord Shiva Nandi was was also seen seated below her leg. Since many believe that Lord Dattatreya was aspect of Lord Vishnu, they considered Goddess Anagha Devi to be aspect of Goddess Lakshmi.

The story glorifying Goddess Anagha Devi and Anagha Deva is found in Datta Purana, a part of Bhavishyottara Purana, compiled by Maharishi Vyasa. In some areas of the

Telugu regions, a slightly deviated form of the same story is told in the form of nomadic tale. They vary a bit between them on how a Asura called Jamba was killed by the Devi to save the celestials from his tyranny. Beyond those stories no other details are available on Anagha Devi except the mention of her name in slokas and hymns composed on Goddess Lakshmi. Since Lord Dattatreya is considered to be the incarnate of Lord Vishnu, Goddess Anagha Devi represents his consort Lakshmi bestower of prosperity, wealth and fortune. Hence the name of Anagha appear in two most important slokas in worship of Goddess Lakshmi.

Goddess Anagha Devi in Ashthothra Namavalis

There are 108 names of Goddess Lakshmi, which are collectively known as Ashthothra Namavalis. In the 32nd line of Lakshmi Ashthothra it is mentioned as:-

Anagha - Om Anaghayai namaha

The 180th sloka in the Lalitha Sahasranama has the following sloka :-

Yoni mudra tri Khandeshi triguna amba tri konaga.
Anagha adbhuta charitra vajnchihit-artha pradayini

Yoni Mudra - She Who Is In The Form Of The Yoni Mudra

Tri Khandeshi - She Who Is The Ruler Of The Tenth Mudra, The Trikhanda

Triguna - She Who Is Endowed With The Three Gunas Of Sattva, Rajas And Tamas

Amba - She Who Is Mother Of All Beings; Mother Of The Universe

Tri Konaga - She Who Resides In The Triangle

Anagha - She Who Is Sinless

Adbhuta Charitra - She Whose Deeds Are Marvelous
Vajnchihit-artha Pradayini - She Who Gives All The Desired Objects

Story of Lord Anagha Deva and Anaha Devi in Bhavishyottara Purana

A story associated with the Anagha Vratam (ritual), mentioned in Datta Purana, a part of the Bhavishyottara Purana, tells us the greatness of Goddess Anaha Devi. Once a long-drawn battle ensued between the celestial forces and the Asuras led by a Demon King called Jamba. The celestials were led by Lord Indira. In the fiercely fought battle which lasted for many years, the celestial forces faced defeat at the hands of the Asuric forces of Jamba; Lord Indira ran away deserting his Kingdom. However, when he sought asylum to the sages in the jungle, at the suggestion of them, Lord Indira along with celestial forces went to Sahyadri mountain and surrendered at the feet of Lord Dattatreya seeking protection. Jamba riding on several asuric vehicles like oxen, buffaloes, tigers, monkeys, donkeys etc chasing the forces of Lord Indira, attacked them from many sides, and killed lots of celestial forces by firing arrows, throwing clubs, heavy rocks, fire arms and Iron rods etc, besides injuring many. Finally, the forces headed by Jamba chasing the celestials reached the Sahyadri mountain where the hermitage of Lord Dattatreya was located.

When the remaining forces of celestial went and surrendered to Lord Dattatreya, he was in the form of

Anagha Deva and his consort Anagha Devi seated by his side, both in the form of ascetics. The Anagha divine couple assured their support to them and calmed them down.

The moment the Asuric forces with Jamba saw Goddess Anagha Devi, they were enchanted by her beauty and, unaware of her divinity due to their devilish nature and lust, they rushed towards her with impure intentions. Lord Anagha gave a gracious, discreet gesture at Goddess Anagha Devi and staired at the faces of the Asuric forces thereby emitting powerful Yogic energies which silently destroyed their strength and power to fight and weakened them completely.

When Lord Anaha Deva's gesture and yogic gaze destroyed the enemies' strength, immediately, Goddess Anagha climbed on to the head of the demons and began to dance. Unable to bear the pain by her dancing, as the Demonic forces cried in agony, the celestial forces attacked them quickly and destroyed every one of them. Lord Indira too attacked Jamba and killed him. Thus, the kingdom of heaven was restored to the celestials who experienced the protective power of Lord Dattatreya in the form of Anagha Deva.

Folklore on Lord Anagha Deva and Anaha Devi

One other story is found in folk lore. Once an Asura named Jambasura attacked Deva Loga and the war lasted for several years; at the end of the battle, Jambasura drove away Lord Indira who in turn approached his Deva guru Brahaspathy seeking help. Deva Guru revealed that due to a powerful boon carried by Jambasura, even the Trimurtis cannot defeat Jambasura with their individual powers; only

the embodiment of Trinities in the form of Lord Dattatreya would be able to kill him.

Lord Indira immediately rushed to the ashram of Lord Dattatreya which was in Sahyadri mountain. The Deva Guru Brahaspathy hinted that he would not get the grace of Lord Dattathreya easily unless he tests them severally; as advised by Brahaspathy, Lord Indra went and met Lord Dattatreya seeking his support to defeat Jambasura. Lord Dattathreya tested Lord Indira in many ways and when finally found his determination of surrender at his feet, he appeared before him in the form of Anaha Deva to help him defeat the asura. In the mean while Jambasura who was chasing Lord Indira too came to Lord Dattatreya's hermitage. In order to finish him, Lord Dattatreya ensured that Jambasura met his consort Anagha Devi first, who was standing in an extremely beautiful form.

As soon as Jambasura met Goddess Anagha Devi who appeared as a beautiful woman, forgetting the purpose for which he came and without knowing who she was, he rushed to her and expressed his desire to marry her. The Devi agreed to marry him with a condition that he should allow her to dance over his head. Since Jambasura was gigantic asura with huge head, it was not difficult for the asura to allow her to dance over his head; in the mean while Lord Dattatreya completely weakened the strength of Jambasura without the asura know of it. When Anaha Devi asked Jambasura to lift her and place her over his head, Jambasura was surprised to find that he could not lift the Devi to keep her over his head for dancing; as he struggled to keep her over his head, the time trickled and finally when the destined time for his end came, he could easily lift and

place her over his head. Once she stood over his head with his full consent, Jambasura was completely crushed under Devi's feet allowing Lord Indira regain his kingdom; hence, it is said that destruction is certain for those whose arrogance and pride goes overhead.

'Anagha Vrath' in various periods of time

In the form of an Avadhoot, Lord Dattatreya narrated the glory of Goddess Anagha Devi to Karthaveeryan and also guided him the manner in which a Vrath has to be performed for Anagha Devi to get the sins washed off; worship of Anaha Devi by her vrath remove all obstacles in marriage proposals, she will bestow grace for good harmony to the married couple all of which ultimately leads to the mental peace and prosperity.

While Karthaveeryan was the first Royal King to propagate the worship of Goddess Anagha in the name of 'Anagha Vrath', King Dasaratha and Lord Rama performed this worship in the Treta Yuga. In Dwapara Yuga, Lord Sri Krishna advised Lord Dharma Raja to perform the vrath and propagate it to his folks.

In many of the Villages where the Vrath is observed, the performance of the Vrath is done with devotional music and dance throughout the night and the next day morning the Pooja is performed to conclude the Vrath.

Usually, the Anaghashtami Vrath is performed on Krishna Paksha Ashtami the eighth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Margasira (December).

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